

23 JUL 1955

Mr. J. Edgar Hoover
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Room 5633, Department of Justice
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

Reference is made to your letter of 11 July in which you ask about the availability of documentary material substantiating one of our recent reports relating to the importance of surprise in a front offensive operation in the initial stage of war.

Unfortunately, such documentary material is not available. Moreover, we have thus far been unable to obtain corroboration of the report from any Soviet defectors.

However, we share your feeling that the recent emphasis which the Soviets have been giving to the element of surprise is of major significance. As you are probably aware, the subject has received prominent attention during the past several months in public statements by Soviet military leaders.

It may be recalled that in Stalin's day the surprise factor was apparently considered of secondary importance. Stalin himself frequently referred to it as "a subsidiary element" in determining the outcome of military conflict. In recent months, however, the Stalinist concepts seem to have been noticeably modified. For example, on 24 March of this year Marshal P. Rotmistrov wrote in RED STAR that "It must be said frankly that in certain circumstances a surprise attack in the form of an atomic or hydrogen weapon attack might be the deciding factor in achieving success not only in the initial period of war but in the war as a whole." These views were more recently further emphasized

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by Lieutenant General S. Shatilov, Deputy Chief of the Main Political Administration of the Defense Ministry. Writing in the 28 May 1955 issue of LITERARY GAZETTE, Shatilov even goes so far as to take a slap at the Stalinist doctrine of absorbing, rather than trying to anticipate, the initial force of the enemy attack. He goes on, "The experience of the great Fatherland War...shows that the significance of the element of surprise in modern conditions has not only not lessened but on the contrary has become more important."

In the event that further information on this subject can be obtained, we will promptly make it available to you.

Sincerely yours,

^{STEN}
Allen W. Dulles
Director

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